4: Hobley G-5 (ca. 1900) 1902 FL11 Luo FL11

CHAPTER III.

Nilotic Tribes of Kavirondo.

The generic name used of these peoples by themselves is Ja-Luo. The Bantu Kavirondo people call them Awa-Nyoro. A very common term for them is Wa-Nife.

Modes of subsistence.—They all live by agriculture. They reside in fixed villages of from ten to fifty huts. Nearly all the villages are surrounded by euphorbia hedges; formerly many villages had mud and occasionally stone walls, but this custom has died out. They breed cattle, sheep, goats, and fowls.

Hunting and fishing.—They dig pitfalls for elephants and also spear elephants. They catch large quantities of fish in the Lake Victoria Nyanza by means of large conical wicker traps "*dema*." The process is as follows:—They have two enormously long ropes; one end of each rope is secured on shore, and the ropes are then paid out into the lake, one rope floats on the surface and from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks; the other rope is a ground rope, and is weighted with stones, and the two ropes are connected at intervals. By means of canoes these ropes are gradually brought round in a semi-circle the size of which gradually decreases. The fish rush shorewards to escape from the drawing in of the net, and rush into the mouth of the big wicker traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water near the shore. At the same time the women walk up and down dragging smaller meshed traps in which they collect myriads of tiny fish the size of a sardine. They fish a great deal at night by torchlight. They state that they got the best hauls of fish after rain; in the dry season they catch comparatively few. Rafts of ambatch wood are used for laying out the net (ambatch is a very light spongy wood growing on the lake shore; it has a prickly bark). They split and dry large quantities of fish and carry it inland from the lake for considerable distances to sell for grain.

Lines and hooks are also used to a certain extent by the Nyakach people and others. The people bordering the lake possess a few dug-out canoes and also a few of the sewn canoes bought from Baganda or Basoga.

Bridges.—They build rough bridges of timber across the rivers when in flood, but not suspension bridges like the North Kavirondo.

Cooking, etc.—They cook in earthen pots inside their huts, and also in the verandah of the huts. All cooking is done by women. The food is served up in little baskets. The father eats with his sons; they generally eat in a little separate hut with open sides built for the purpose. Women eat separately and inside the house.

Fire.—They know the use of firesticks but rarely need them, as they can always obtain a glowing ember from one or other of their neighbours.

[pp. 11-25 not processed]

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Two Rafts and one Fish Trap and Weir at mouth of Kibos River.

Fish Traps (Musathi) near mouth of Kibos River.

[p.98C.]

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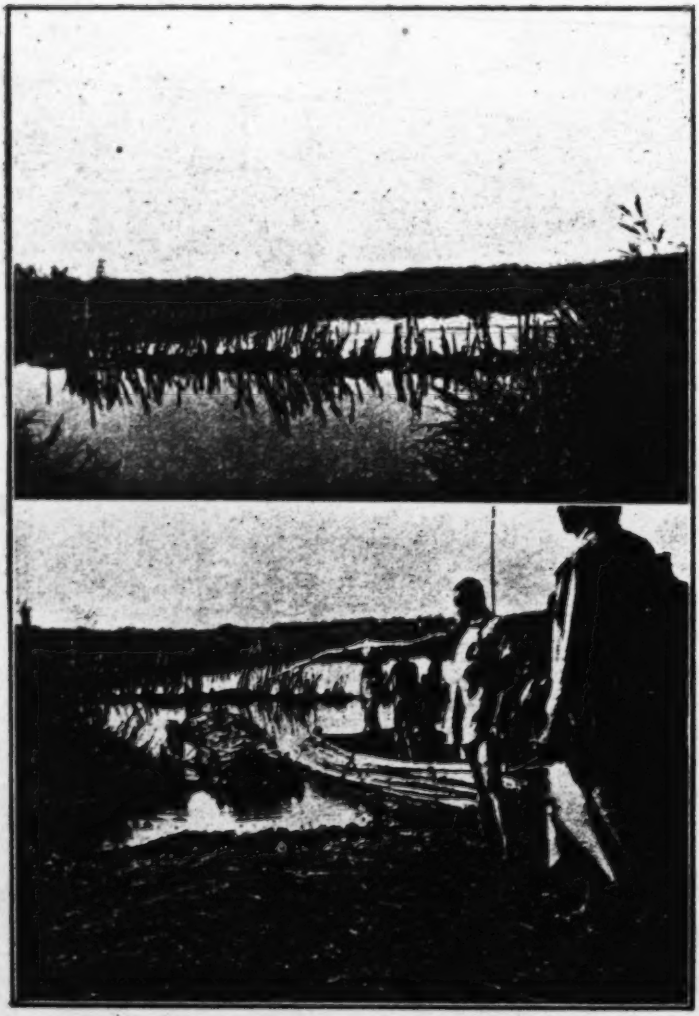

Fish Weir (Kew) at mouth of Kibos River.

Kavirondo raft near fish weir at mouth of Kibos River.

[p. 98 D]

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR DECLINE:

228 The decline in the industry appears to be due to three main factors:—

(a) Fewer fish in the Kavirondo Gulf than formerly.
(b) Decline in retail prices giving less profit.
(c) Poverty of the fishermen.

In regard to (c) it may be remarked that during the years of high retail prices many wealthy merchants, Goans and Europeans, were engaged in fishing. These have since withdrawn and the class now H26 carrying on the work usually have to buy nets and boats on credit or pay heavy interest on borrowed money, destroying the fishers' small profit and causing more and more to abandon fishing"

It is generally admitted that the catches of fish are less than they were. In the early years the average catch is estimated to have been over 25 fish per 100 yards of net while the boats operated at only about a mile from shore. In later years the catch fell to 5 per net and to get these the boats have to go from 12 to 15 miles out. The number of boats has also fallen off. At the height of the industry's prosperity there were 150 boats working on an average 10 nets per boat. Some boats worked as much as 20 to 25 nets.

NATIVE METHODS OF CAPTURE: NETS.

226 Turning now to the methods employed by the ordinary natives
227 living along the Lake shores we find that fish are caught by drag nets, weirs, traps, harpoons, long lines and to a very small extent with fishing rods. The drag nets used are made of papyrus stems fastened close together and are about 5 ft. deep. They are made in two sizes, the larger size being called by the Jaluo " Gogo " and the smaller " Ogoda." One end of the net is towed out by men in canoes some distance into the Lake and is taken round in a half circle so as to enclose a considerable area of water. The two ends are then drawn towards the shore so that the net brings in with it any fish that have been enclosed. When it is fairly close in men wade into the water with long baskets (Dholuo, Aunga) and capture the fish in these. These baskets ae a form of trap made on much the same principle as a lobster pot and consist of a large cone of basket work about 6 ft. long with a smaller cone inside it pointing in the same direction. The inner cone is open at the end so that when a fish enters at the wide mouth of the basket it swims through the hole at the end of the inner cone and gets imprisoned in the space between the two cones.

BASKET TRAPS, PORTABLE AND STATIONARY.

227 A smaller form of Aunga is used by women, called Aunga Ketenga. There are two varieties of this, one with the double cone and one with only a single cone. When using the double cone ones they place three

227 or four in a line on the bottom. They then go some distance in front and frighten the fish into the traps. The single cone traps are used by the women in a different way. They hold the baskets in both hands with the wide part facing towards them and wade backwards in shallow water drawing the backets along the bottom towards them. When the fish enter the basket they raise it out of the water in a perpendicular position. The following fish are caught by this means: Nyawino, Ndera, Ningu, and Akunga (eels). The Ningu is not caught in rivers during May, June and July as it goes to the Lake then presumably to spawn.

BASKET TRAPS USED AT WEIRS.

226 Enormous fish weirs (Dholuo, Kek) are a feature of the rivers of
227 Kavirondo. Some of these are built of wood and some of stones and extend right across the rivers from bank to bank. At intervals in the weir there are gaps and basket traps (Dholuo, Musathi) are used on the upper side of these holes to catch the fish as they pass through up stream. The Musathi are similar in principle to the double coned Aunga, gut are made of reeds fastened together longitudinally, while all types of Aunga are plaited.

PORTABLE TRAPS.

Another form of basket fish trap is the Sienyu. This is also a conical basket with a hole at the top or narrow end. The native using it wades along in shallow water pushing it down at intervals on to the bottom of the lake or river. If a fish happens to be imprisoned it is heard splashing inside and the native puts his arm through the top hole and pulls it out. The Sienyu is also made of reeds fastened together longitudinally.

STATIONARY TRAPS, BAITED.

In addition to the foregoing there is another kind of basket trap used called Omuongo, which is almost identical with a European lobster pot and used with bait and in the same way.

FISHING SPEARS.

226 Fish are sometimes harpooned by natives wading in the water.
411 The harpoon used is narrow and has no barb and is called by the Jaluo Bedthi. Mumi and Kamongo are speared in this way.

The natives of Mohuru are said to go out in canoes on moonlight nights with grass torches and harpoon the fish.

FISHING WITH ROD AND LINES.

226 Fishing with rod and line is indulged in principally as an amuse-
227 ment and by juveniles. Long rods made from a tree called Poo are used by men. Hooks (Dholuo, Oloo) are bought in the bazaar. The bait used is a sort of worm (Dholuo, Oniambo) found in the mud. Mumi (barbel) are caught in this way. The line is made from

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papyrus fibre. Small rods made from a tree called Osire are used by children. A dried piece of mtama stalk is used as a float. Nyawino, Nthira, Osoga, and Sire are caught in this way. The bait used is Oniambo or a piece of groundnut. Long lines, Mugondo, with a large number of hooks are sometimes used. These are left in the water for some time with floats at intervals to buoy them up.

FISH USED FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION.

As most of the fish caught by natives is not eaten fresh, but dried, the whole of the population of these locations could easily eat fish caught on the Lake shore. In fact there is no doubt that dried fish is transported and eaten by the natives very much further inland than these Lake shore locations. The whole Jaluo population of Central and South Kavirondo will eat fish if they can get it. The population is approximately as follows:—

Central Kavirondo	316,000
South Kavirondo (Luo)	180,387

The two Districts which border on the Lake shores in Nyanza Province are Central and South Kavirondo. The natives living close to the shore in both these Districts spend a large part of their time fishing. It has been estimated that about two to three thousand in each District are more or less permanently employed in this work. They use canoes (Dholuo, Yiyi) made of rough boards sewn together with grass fibre and caulked with mud. There are probably about 1,000 canoes in each District (Central and South Kavirondo). They are propelled with single bladed paddles (Ngai).

The following are the names and population of the Locations in these two Districts which actually border on the Lake shore from the Sio River on the Uganda border on the North of the Gulf to Mohuru on the Tanganyika border on the South side:—

CENTRAL KAVIRONDO.

Name of Location.	Population.
Samia	33,000
Kadimu	6,000
Sakwa	18,000
Uyoma	10,000
Asembo	18,000
Seme	26,000
Kisumu	15,000
West Kano	19,000
Nyakach	22,000
	162,000

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SOUTH KAVIRONDO.

Karachonya	21,105
Kochia	7,327
Kaniada	9,579
Kasigunga	2,442
Kaksingiri	1,463
Gwasi	5,390
Karungu	2,569
Kadem	11,145
Mohuru	771
Rusinga (Island)	2,099
Mfwangano (Island)	1,792
	65,682

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF VISIT TO KACH BAY.

226 The following short account of a trip round Kach Bay and up the Miriu river may be of interest as showing different methods of fishing followed by the Lake shore Jaluo. I had arranged with the son of Chief Amimo of Kanu to go and see the fish being taken out of the basket traps at the weirs at the mouth of the Kibos river and at 6-30 a.m. on May the 29th started off from the Dhow Pier with B. in the Government Motor Boat. It took us about one hour to get to the mouth of the river and on the way we saw the fishing fleet coming back with the night's catch to Nanga fishing station. We ran the motor boat a few yards up the river mouth and landed and the boy lit a fire and prepared breakfast. While waiting we watched the various fish-eating birds which were very numerous. The ordinary
136 Darter Anhinja rufa (Dholuo, Osoo) was there in large numbers. This bird goes right down under the water after the fish. It is said to capture the Fulu, Adel, and Osoga. An occasional cormorant (Dholui, Kwasi) was to be seen and one or two storks (Dholuo, Okol) while numerous birds like seagulls and teons (Dholuo, Sialo) were flying about and occasionally dipping down into the water to capture a small fish.

The most remarkable birds however were the pelicans, *Pelicanus onocrotalus* (Dholuo, Mbuzi) which were floating quietly about and occasionally dipping their enormous beaks into the water and then raising them skyward to allow the unfortunate victim to slip down their throat more easily. Large numbers of kingfishers, *Ceryle rudis* and *Corythornis cristatus* (Dholuo, Kalamendi) were also seen. The empty shells of numerous fresh water snails (Dholuo, Ogongolo) strewed the shore, which was very sandy. While we were waiting a native brought up a small fish trap (Dholuo, Musathi) which he had just taken out of a ditch running into the Lake. This contained five

small fish: two Adel about four inches long, two Sire and one Ningu. We were also shown two small eels (Akunga). When breakfast was finished we walked up to see the big weir across the river. It was about 50 yards from the mouth and stretched from bank to bank in a zig-zag line. It was made of rough poles driven into the sandy bottom of the river which was very sluggish at this point. Numerous gaps had been left in the barrier and above every gap facing down stream was fastened a fish trap (Musathi) of which there were about 30 or 40 in all. By this time numerous natives had collected together and several rafts had been brought down to assist in lifting up the traps. These rafts were of several kinds. One kind consisted of long thin poles of very light ambatch (Dholuo, Mburi) wood fastened together. This wood, when dry, is as light as cork and is used for floats for the Mugondo, or stationary lines, and also by the Mohuru natives for floating their hippopotami harpoons. The second raft was a large square frame about 12 ft. by 5 ft. made of poles fastened together three deep by iron rods. The floor appeared to be made of some sort of matting. This raft, as it appeared to be the safest, we chose to stand on while watching the fish traps being taken up. The raft was tied up to the top side of the weir while two natives went into the water which was up to their shoulders and unfastened the traps one by one. When they were undone the native who was with us on the raft pulled the trap out of the water with the mouth up and the fish that were inside slipped to the end of the cone. When he got it on the raft he turned it the other way up and the fish could then be pulled out where the inner basket was fastened to the outer one at the mouth. The fish were then put into a receptacle of matting work for safe keeping called Ngaha. We watched 20 of these baskets being taken out and the following is a record of the catch in each basket. I was informed that these catches were very very small compared with what is usually taken in the months when fish are plentiful.

136 226 226 501 226

It is noteworthy that only one of the 20 baskets drew a complete blank and in one other both the fish Ngege were dead.

1st trap	1 Mumi	11th trap	5 Ngege
2nd ,, ...	2 Ngege	12th ,, ...	1 Ngege
3rd ,, ...	1 Ngege	13th ,, ...	9 Ngege
4th ,, ...	1 Ngege	14th ,, ...	8 Ngege
5th ,, ...	1 Ngege	15th ,, ...	1 Ngege
6th ,, ...	1 Mbiru	16th ,, ...	8 Ngege
	1 Ningu	17th ,, ...	Empty
7th ,, ...	1 Ngege	18th ,, ...	2 Ngege
8th ,, ...	1 Sire		1 Mbiru
	8 Ngege	19th ,, ...	1 Ngege
9th ,, ...	1 Ngege	20th ,, ...	1 Ngege
10th ,, ...	2 Ngege		

226 The total catch of the 20 traps was therefore 38 Ngege, 1 Mumi, 2 Mbiru, 1 Ningu, and 1 Sire, *i.e.*, 43 fish in all.

We left the Kibos river at 9-30 and went on towards the end of Kach Bay seeing numerous fish eating birds on the way.

LINE WITH MULTIPLE HOOKS.

There were also quite a number of natives in canoes and one of these to whom we spoke was working a long line called by the Jaluo Mugondo. This is a very long line weighted at one end with a stone. At intervals along it are hooks fastened to the main line by short lengths of thinner line and baited with pieces of fish mostly Fulu. It is also buoyed at intervals by floats of ambatch (Mburi) wood. The native in the canoe holds the other end. The hooks of some of these lines we saw were the ordinary barbed variety bought in the shops but one man had barbless hooks evidently locally made.

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They were very sharp and curved almost into a complete circle, while the point was slightly bent to one side. I tried to buy this line from the owner but he refused to part with it.

WEIRS AND TRAPS, NOT IN RIVERS.

Along the shore and end of Kach Bay, near the mouth of the Nyando river, we saw two other varieties of fish weirs called by the Jaluo Osageru and Bwanza, something on the principle of the river weir (Kek).

The Osageru resembles a maze and is made of papyrus stalks (Dholuo, Togo) driven into the bottom of the Lake and fastened together and forming a barrier through which the fish cannot pass. As far as I can discover the fish in the course of their peregrinations meet this barrier and move along it until they get caught in a suitably placed basket trap (Musathi). The Osageru is as often as not entirely below the surface of the water and just outside the mouth of the Miriu River we came across a canoe and a raft containing two and one man respectively engaged in building this form of trap. We were informed that a fourth man was working on the Lake bottom pushing in the papyrus stalks. He eventually came up for air and it was amazing the amount of time he spent underneath.

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TRAPS AND ARTIFICIAL RUNS.

The Bwanza is also made of papyrus stalks. It is a small barrier built across little channels cut into the papyrus swamps or scooped out of the sandy shore either on the side of the Lake or on the river bank.

A small gap is left in the barrier, and basket traps are placed on the side away from the Lake or river as the case may be. The fish

226 trying to work their way into these channels get caught in the traps. On leaving the end of Kach Bay we made for the mouth of the Miriu river. On the way we were much interested in the performances of
136 a kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) which flew for some time parallel to the boat and a considerable height above the water. At intervals it would spot a fish, poise itself for a second or two, then drop like a stone perpendicularly into the Lake beak first with a splash, to rise again almost immediately and continue its flight. The Miriu is known
133 higher up as the Kipsonoi and Sondo, but is called the Miriu when it passes through the gorge in the escarpment and comes out into the Lake plain. From there it runs through the level country at first between high solid banks, but as it nears the Lake these disappear and are succeeded by dense papyrus swamps. The channel is exceedingly tortuous, in some cases nearly doubling back on itself, and the total distance from the gorge to the Lake is about seven miles. We took the boat about five or six miles up till we grounded on a sandy spot
136 after which we returned down stream. Several crocodiles (Dholuo, Nuang) were sighted on the way up and one varanus (Kalaguena) which is said to eat fish. When we started to float down with the engine running very quietly, we saw more crocodiles lying out on the mud banks, especially on the higher reaches of the river.

These reptiles must destroy vast quantities of fish and as very few of them are shot they are presumably increasing. It took about an hour to get back to the mouth of the river and two hours from there to Kisumu. I saw no otters (Dholuo, Mandoholo) on this trip. Some years ago I saw two swimming in the Miriu river.

The following are the names of the various fish found in the Lake, with a brief description of each of those I have seen. The list has no claim to be exhaustive.

(1) Suma. A big fish with a nose and mouth like a trunk. Inhabits the Lake. It is not very popular as food. It is rarely taken in nets or on hooks. A few are taken in traps.
[753] Scales very small. Has firm flesh. The natives think that they get itch from eating it. —*Mormyrus sp.*

(2) Ngege. A carp-like fish. Firm flesh which lasts well. This is the principal food fish of the Kavirondo Gulf and is sent to Nairobi in considerable quantities. It is extremely like the Mbiru. —*Tilapia sp.*

(3) Mbiru. A good eating fish and very difficult to distinguish from the Ngege. The only difference appears to be that it is a bit darker and the tops of the spine are reddish. It does not keep fresh so long. A small variety of this fish, possibly its fry, is called Obudi. —*Tilapia variabilis.*

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

blocks on the upper part of the arm. The wooden blocks are coloured red with oxide of iron. A band strung with small pieces of wood of the same colour is sometimes worn round the forehead. Some of the married men wear a semi-circle of ivory on the forehead, made of the split canine teeth of the hippopotamus. (The tooth, however, I am informed, is not split, but ground down until it is only an eighth of an inch thick.) Others wear the tusks of a wart-hog. The Ja-luo men, like most of the tribes of Nilotic origin, frequently adopt a curious stork-like attitude, standing on some hillock or ant-hill on one leg with the other leg bent and the sole of the foot apposed to the inner side of the knee of the leg on which the body is poised. They usually wear sandals of leather when travelling.

The Ja-luo live much by *agriculture*. They cultivate *sorghum, sweet potatoes, peas, beans, eleusine, pumpkins, tobacco, and hemp*. Salt is made from the ashes of reeds. They eat practically *all kinds of meat* except the hyæna. Young men eat leopard in order to make them fierce in war. The crested crane is universally protected, and is never killed. The women do not eat fowls, and some women do not eat sheep or eggs. Some eat hippopotamus, and some refuse that meat. Women do not drink milk, but eat it cooked with food. They have a disagreeable custom of mixing cows' urine with the milk of the cow. The urine is allowed to stand a day or two in order to increase its flavour. The people say that this admixture increases the amount of butter in the milk. They like the flavour, and think that it has medicinal value. They kill oxen by sticking a knife into the jugular vein. The head must be pointed to the west during the operation. Sheep and goats are killed in the same manner. Besides the flesh of fowls, cattle, sheep, and goats, they eat large quantities of fish, which they obtain from the rivers, and, above all, from the waters of the Victoria Nyanza.

Cooking is done entirely by women in earthen pots inside the hut or on the verandah, and the food is served in little wicker baskets. Father and sons eat together in a little separate hut which has open sides. Women eat separately from the men inside their own houses.

They do not *hunt* much with dogs, but catch a good deal of game in pitfalls. They will also attack the elephant with spears. Fish is caught in the Victoria Nyanza by means of large, conical wicker traps called "dema." The process is as follows: They bring two very long ropes, one end of each of which is firmly secured to the shore. One rope lies, weighted, along the bottom under the water, the other floats on the surface, but from it hangs a fringe of papyrus stalks. The two ropes above and below correspond with its other, and are connected at intervals with strings to ensure their correspondence, while the fringe of papyrus

14: Johnston G-4, 5 (no date) 1904 FL11 Luo FL11

strips makes this arrangement into a kind of pliable fence. This, by means of canoes, is brought round through the water back to the shore till it describes rather more than a semi-circle. The bringing round of the rope serves to chase all the fish that are between it and the shore towards the mouths of the big wickerwork traps which are placed in a row in the shallow water. The women, at the same time, walk up and down dragging traps of smaller mesh, in which they collect numbers of small fish. A good deal of fish-spearing takes place at night by torch-

435. JA-LUO OUT FISHING IN KAVIRONDO BAY WITH SKINES OF PAPYRUS STALKS

light. The Ja-luo fishermen state that they get the best hauls of fish after a downpour of rain. *Rafts* of ambatch wood similar to those in use on the Nile are employed in laying out the nets. The Nyakach people of the south shore of Kavirondo Bay fish to a great extent with hook and line. The Ja-luo *canoes* are small dug-outs of poor appearance. Large quantities of fish are split and dried in the sun and sent inland to exchange for game.

Both sexes smoke and chew *tobacco*, but only old men smoke *hemp* through water-pipes. Boys and young men in the prime of life are not allowed to smoke hemp, as it is thought injurious to their manhood.

16: Northcote G-5 (no date) 1907 FL11 Luo FL11

storm of rain broke over the valley, and next morning the complainants were back again to point out that his refusal to come in at the Bwana's summons had so frightened the rain-maker that he had sent rain next day, and to offer most hearty thanks for the white man's beneficent interference.

Though the Jaluo have good manners on the whole, some of their customs are decidedly the reverse of civilised. In common with the other Nilotic tribes of British East Africa, they draw blood from the living cattle and drink it. The custom, however, has its justification, for in many parts of Kavirondo this is the only method by which the natives can obtain salt. Also the older men are confirmed drunkards and hemp smokers, which causes them to age very quickly and probably shortens the average term of life.

Those who dwell on the shores of the great lake and of the larger rivers are expert fishermen: they catch fish with rod and line, a sunken trawl line, in weirs, by woven grass substitutes for nets, and by spearing them with four-pronged wooden spears which they throw with extraordinary accuracy. They are also keen huntsmen, though of little use out shooting, and possess highly trained dogs which will run down an oribi or hare or find a wounded guinea fowl knocked down by their throwing sticks.

In character they are naturally very honest, except with regard to cattle, a temptation which no East African can withstand. They are extremely jealous of any relations between their women and men of other tribes, nations or colour; but among themselves an unmarried woman who has reached the age of puberty may have as many friends, as they call them, as she likes, provided that they come from another clan; after marriage she must confine her attentions to her husband.

Perhaps their most pleasant trait is their love of fun and laughter: the feeblest joke or the slightest bit of horse-play will set them in roars of laughter. For hospitality and industry they have a well-earned name; they are, in fact, in every way most amenable when treated with a little kindness and consideration. They have a considerable knowledge of blacksmith's work, though the spears which they turn out cannot be compared with those of the Masai for fine work. With the latter tribe, however, they show a well-developed artistic sense, the designs on their shields being generally handsome and well carried out. They are also very fond of music—of a kind: they play upon an eight-stringed harp, which is mainly used to provide an accompaniment to their extempore songs, composed in the heroic or comic vein.

Speaking generally and comparatively they are a peaceful, non-aggressive folk, though the common impression that they are cowards is ridiculously wrong: in the writer's small experience of African tribes they have shown themselves better fighters than the much-lauded Swahili, and better policemen than the dreaded Masai; they are certainly more amenable to discipline and less inclined to prefer their own wisdom to that of their officers.

On the other hand they are most painfully litigious: civil cases which arose in